

IN THE SHADOW OF THE ROCKIES

BY
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Being some account of the History of
the Olds District, its Products
and Possibilities.

FROM
THE OLDS GAZETTE
JOB PRESSES

IN THE SHADOW OF THE ROCKIES

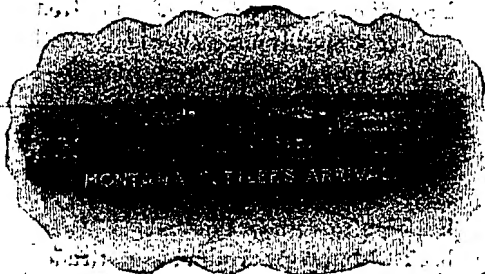
○LDS—The seat of a noted agricultural district in that sunny climate for which the name Alberta has become synonymous, the world over.

OLDS—The distributing point for the needs of man through the rich park country to the west, reaching on into the foothills bordering that pile of rock whose summit forms fantastic zig-zags against the azure depths and over which poets vie in rhyme-making; to the east o'er the undulating prairie which but a few decades since was the unquestioned domain of wandering bands of redskins, countless herds of buffalo and the occasion-

al bachelor rancher with his "cattle upon a thousand hills."

OLDS—A "nerve-centre" for the above described expanse, located in the heart of the settled portion of one of the infant Canadian provinces and her claim that, geographically, she is the hub of the homesteadable portion of Alberta, is one which the maps are likely to prove for some time to come. The latest map from the department at Ottawa shows Township 64 to be the one furthest north (aside from the Peace River country) open for homesteading. The township line intersecting Olds is number 32, so the reader readily observes the force of the statement. The radius from this point is being settled with the sturdy husbandman from the best corners of the globe and the virgin soil is becoming a wealth-producing agency—an influence which also invites "the idle hands and the idle lands" to come in contact, thus contributing one of the solutions for the aggravated questions of the day between capital and labor.

But a few years in the past Olds was said to be about the size of its name and only two leagues toward the rising sun was beyond human habitation. A small party of thrifty Danes hailing from Washington State and a similar number of people from good old Ontario arrived in this por-



tion of the land of their adoption in '92 and on the memorable 7th of April 1893 landed a coach of Nebraskans and their trainload of effects. This group contained ninety souls, most of whom were old Canadians returning to the mother sod.

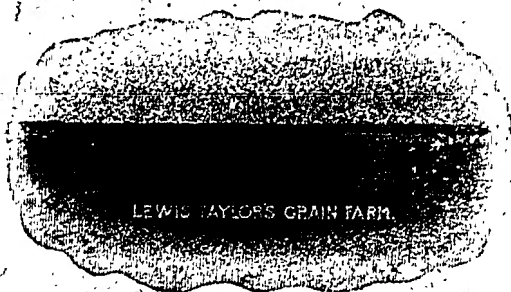
In those days publicity campaigns were little heard of. Letters "back home" influenced an occasional one to cast his lot in the new land and thus the immigration work continued until the "occasional one" grew more numerous until finally a babel of tongues greeted the ear for several days during each migrating period—the springtime. From the shriek of the locomotive, hauling a muchly mixed burden—mail express, human and other freight—twice every week, we have developed into a commonwealth requiring up-to-date mail, express and freight trains daily. Those whose good fortune it has been to witness this change look back with satisfaction and gratitude for having been a portion of it.

In attempting to indicate the expansion of the Olds District, we beg to first dwell upon the Agricultural Society's work in this development. In the days already referred to, no nicely organized association for the promotion of the best interests of agriculture existed but the spirit of "tell-

ing it abroad" was manifest in every settler. The progressiveness of the sons of toil asserted itself in the form of what was termed "Free Fairs" in the falls of 1894 and 1895. Upon the first occasion the farmers practically took possession of the then little station, decorated the front with sheaves of grains and grasses and the platform was strewn with a line-up of boxes, pans and kettles full of the mammoth type of vegetables. This was planned of course to occur on "Train Day" that all passengers might view the samples of what Olds district was producing. As if all had been arranged, the train in arriving on this particular day had among its passengers Hon. Frank Oliver (he was just plain Frank Oliver M. L. A., at that time), who was returning from his duties at the legislative assembly at Regina. Canada's new minister of the interior was greatly interested in the Olds exhibition and pronounced it good, but an old German passenger stepped up and went Frank one bet-

ter by saying: "Yah, dot is pooty good scheme. Dot show makes for dees blace peeshness, already, sure."

The 1895 Free Fair was a better organized show, due to the extra ability in the project of Mr. T. N. Willing; for several years the inspector of noxious weeds, Regina, who was a home-



steadier of those days, and Mr. H. L. Briggs who brought the model farm near Olds into existence.

In these fairs the farmers were not seeking cash prizes, glory was all they were after and a little colored ribbon to indicate the degree. While these

displays were intensely on the cheap we feel safe in stating that in them germinated the Agricultural Society which has developed into one of the associations of the province, owning a nicely located tract of forty acres near town and which is well equipped with exhibition building, amphitheatre, stables, one of the fastest half mile tracks in the province and a finely cultivated field of timothy which yielded a truly exhibition crop last season.

It may not be too much of a side-step to refer to the social side of life in the early days to better emphasize by way of contrast the advance enjoyed along this line as well as in more material things. The first settlers being for the greater part from portions of this great sphere where little or no sleighing was known, could not boast of a set of "bobs," hence that commodity known as necessity started the fertile grey at designing vehicles for winter locomotion and as they appeared in the village on "Train Day," a sight met the eye which was certainly

a feast. Every horny-fisted son of toil had a set of runners, seemingly made after his own heart. For several years these instruments of transit held the distinction of being without a copy—no two alike. Then we knew nothing of wireless telegraphy but we were quite familiar with tongueless sleighs. One type might be a mere stoneboat, another of beautifully curved-nosed runners after the Russian style and which was really embellished with a pole tongue, while another was a nice little house, door on one side and peekholes in the dashboard, which if in time of war might have been taken for an advance armored car of soldiery. However, the real thing was the sled with irons on the runners—this was a mark of true nobility. Any man with an ironed sled in "them" times was truly "goin' some." But today such grotesque patterns of winter perambulators would be nearly as amusing on the streets of progressive Olds "nestled in the shadow of the Rockies," as upon

the thoroughfares of gay Toronto.

The festive inclinations of the frontiersman linger with a sort of sweet laziness in our memories. An amusing sight was put into execution by one of the then young farmers (and who now wears a diamond as big



OLDS CREAMERY

as a hickory nut) and which vision will not leave the writer though his eyesight fails. This homesteader was the same Jehu at driving as he is now and on a particularly snappy winter morn decided to bring along a huge

log of firewood for some bachelor boys in town. Our attention was first arrested with what seemed the butt end of a blizzard, then appeared just ahead of this cyclonic disturbance the outline of a team, driver and the front bob (one of the ancient kind described) with the log lashed on with linder twine, the hind end dragging in the snow, crosswise and otherwise. The reader can fancy how a ten-mile-an-hour-gait would hurl the "beautiful."

The directing of the youthful minds in ways educational was not forgotten in the early period and the Olds institution of learning at that time had upon special occasions as high as twenty pupils enrolled. Today her five rooms are inadequate and the town district has voted for a four room addition to be erected to look after the increasing attendance.

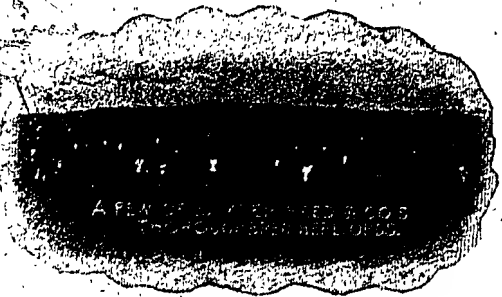
Among the "relics" of ancient history regarding Olds is the thought of the medium of exchange of that time. When the world's money panic was on the Albertans with their little "all"

expended, had a keener taste of the inconvenience of being without that something called cash, than those of older countries. But it was all in a lifetime and the cheerfulness manifested by the more than sturdy settler of that time startles us now as we think of it. The "swap" idea was most popular and was prosecuted with a vim and completeness which would give the editor of "System" sufficient food for an extra edition of his magazine.

However, now all is changed. The advent of the government creamery, more of the fertile soil turned for a kiss of the sun's rays and the increase in the herds of kine brought about a change in the lives of the Olds old timers. Our farmers no longer begged for grain buyers, our dairy products were earning a good reputation in the worlds markets and our plush-covered steers were sufficient in numbers to cause competitive buyers to do the "coming."

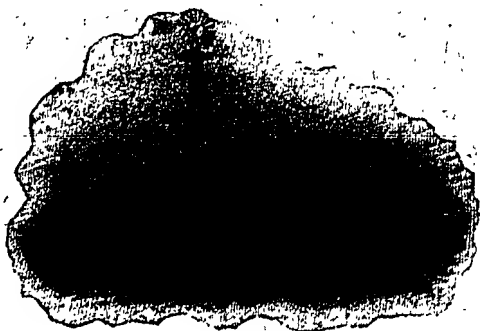
One of the most extensive ranch

concerns in Alberta is located fourteen miles due east of Olds and a notable transaction of this company was its importation from Texas of 1,200 Hereford heifers, four years ago, and their exportation of cow and steer beef for the Chicago market last fall. The ac-



companying cut is that of a bunch of these cattle the following year after their arrival, the writer and the photographer forming the attraction which so riveted their attention as to give one the impression that the dumb brutes knew that they were being photographed.

During the past years several large farms have been established in the Olds district. The second view is of one such plant and which was about the first to introduce grain feeding of steers native grasses being the standard fat producer of this country.



Although "in the shadow of the Rockies," where agricultural pursuits are supposed to be fraught with great difficulties by so many of the outside world, the past extreme season, for this and other countries, came the nearest to crop failure that we have

witnessed in fourteen successive years in the Olds district, and yet a great amount of feed grain and considerable seed was sown just the same. Then the wealth of timothy and wild hay which has been marketed, has been and is a resource to the farmer which other countries might easily envy. Olds has been noted for being one of the greatest hay (tame or wild) producing points in Alberta. When visiting the New Westminster Exhibition two years ago and meeting mill men who learned that we were from the "See Olds First" town, we would almost without exception hear the remark. "Olds—that's where we get all our hay."

Before drawing this article to a close we feel that we should refer to that great natural wealth which all Alberta enjoys in general and our fine district has a large share in particular; viz: the great coal deposits. While the mining of this commodity is giving considerable labor at different points east of Progressive Olds, the

developement of such a magnificent resource is only in its infancy. Due west of our town and along the rivers are great exposures of coal which await the miner's pick. The slower settlement of the park country to the west has meant also slower road making, and this in turn has left the immense coal beds in that locality practically untouched, however, the settlers have brushed the dirt away from several 7 or 8 ft. exposures and are getting all the coal they need with their shovels. In a short time this product will be teamed into Olds by the settler as is being done by the farmers to the east. With such coal wealth lying latent and only awaiting the trained hand of the artizan, who can spell the enormous wealth to be gotten from this pent-up energy? A recent surveying party through the western country is another indication to the settlers "in the shadow of the Rockies," that a railway will be the great assistant in developing their coal beds, and before a five-year peri-

od. With coal, limestone, freestone, cement beds and timber as an inducement, does a man have to be a prophet to make the statement that money will soon be poured into this portion of the country and steel ribbons will penetrate a region laden with natural wealth?

Interested farmer and manufacturer, who may read these lines, are these statements not worthy of investigation?

Is not such a location as Olds the very point which you are desirous of settling in? Is not a deep, rich, loamy soil, with a good record back of it where you wish to scour your plow? Or, is not a fine farming, dairying and haying country where you wish to plant your factory whether humble or of imposing proportions? At the seat of production is the spot for cheap living for your mill or factory help and thus you are enabled to better compete in the world's markets by reason of the cost of production being less.

But the influence which is now turning the eyes of the eager land hunter

towards Progressive Olds is couched in the fact that this most splendid town is the practical starting point for the great area of new lands which have been recently thrown open for free grants. The township line running east and west through our flourishing burg penetrates the very centre of this vast domain of new country sixty miles to the east and comprising something like 2,000 free farms and if the Pre-Emption Bill passes Parliament there may be as many more 160-acre tracts for the homesteaders to pre-empt. The distance from Olds, the best market town available from these lands, would be a barrier to their settlement, but for the fact that the Grand Trunk Pacific branch from Battleford to Calgary is thought to certainly cross this block of land, when nearer markets will be created. But until this stretch of railway engineering is accomplished Olds is the feasible place for market and from which to start for homesteads, as here is located the homestead office from which information regard-

ing the available lands can be secured as well as freshly marked plots and where also entries for lands selected may be made upon the land seeker's return from his trip of inspection.

However, in dwelling upon the fact of there being that immense stretch of new lands to the east of Olds, we do



not wish to give the impression that there are no free lands left closer under "the shadow of the Rockies." In this latter location and directly west from our town, on the great Trunk highway already referred to, and from thirty to forty-five miles distant, are

about 250 homesteads more or less covered with timber, which causes some to turn back, but a far greater number are filing on these lands, considering the building material and the fuel question of sufficient importance to overbalance the task of clearing. Sawmills are planted at convenient points throughout the country to the west and the bush work is now at its height of activity, which means good substantial homes being built this season and replacing the log shack.

Another feature of vast importance to Olds and the western group of homesteaders is the installing of the government bridge across the Big Red Deer river west of here. This work cost about \$30,000, and would probably reach twice that expenditure but for the great amount of timber and stone which was easily accessible for use in its structure.

To people in quest of new homes where conditions are so vastly superior to what they probably went through in their first pioneering experience, we

have no hesitancy in recommending all thus inclined to "See Olds First." With church, school and musical privileges so eminently in evidence throughout our district and in our town, the prevailing good nature and sociability of our people, the wealth to be gathered from the cultivation of our richest of soils, the most gratifying results obtained by thoroughbred horse and cattle breeding and the encouraging reward realized by giving dairying and poultry raising close attention, are some of the most important features which this portion of a glorious province can truthfully dwell upon in attempting to spread abroad the good news of a great district, and of which Progressive Olds, "in the shadow of the Rockies," and of whose lofty peaks our town commands the finest view of any place along the Calgary & Edmonton line, is the conceded centre. All inquiries regarding town and district will be cheerfully answered by the secretary of the Olds Board of Trade.

"SEE OLDS FIRST."

THE OLDS CREAMERY

The Olds Creamery was established in the year 1897 as a co-operative concern and was operated the first year by a board of directors. Later on it was reorganized and the business handled by the Dominion Government, who on the creation of Alberta into a province, handed the business over to the Provincial Department of Agriculture. The building and plant is owned and maintained by the shareholders who are for the most part patrons.

Private creameries are operated at Mayton, 15 miles east of Olds and at Harmattan 14 miles West.

Dairying is a very important and paying industry of this district.

OLDS LANDS

While the land available for homestead entry near Olds has long since been taken up, Olds is the natural starting point for large tracts which are being opened up, both east and west of the town, and good roads are being pushed thru to these new lands. The Dominion Lands Sub-Agency being located here for these lands, settlers should call and get plats of the available homesteads.

There is abundance of good land to be had within a few miles of Olds at from \$8.00 to \$40.00 per acre, according to location and improvements.